

Legislation covers 10 million low income kids, addresses objections

Washington, DC - Rep. Peter Welch supported new bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and provide health care for 10 million low income children this afternoon.

While maintaining coverage for 10 million children, the revised bill addresses policy objections raised earlier by the president and his congressional allies. President Bush has again declared his opposition to the bill.

"We should not nickel and dime away health care for our kids. Congress must continue to take a stand against this president. His priorities are not the priorities of the American people. And his priorities are not the priorities of Vermont families," said Welch.

Welch added, "This is a good compromise that acknowledges the objections by the White House, but rejects denying health care to low income children."

H.R. 3963, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007, passed 265 to 142.

Addressing specific concerns by President Bush and his allies in Congress, this legislation:

- Strengthens the original bill's eligibility cap at 300 percent of poverty (just over \$60,000 per year for a family of four);
- Phases childless adults off the program within one year instead of two; and
- Adds additional clarifying language that illegal immigrants cannot obtain coverage.

The legislation is fully paid for and continues to focus on the lowest income families first.

Like the last bill, this bipartisan legislation extends health care coverage for 6.6 million children currently enrolled in SCHIP and provides coverage for an additional 4 million children currently without health care. On October 2, Congress sent the president H.R. 947, which received overwhelming bipartisan support. The House last week fell 13 votes short of overriding the president's veto.